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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Personnel

FROM: John F. Blake  
Deputy Director for Administration

SUBJECT: Panel Size and Composition

REFERENCE: Memorandum from DDCI to D/Pers, dtd 27 Sep 78,  
Subj: Composition of Career Service and Subgroup  
Panels and More Uniform Agency Standards for  
Personnel Management Operations

1. We would assume that the proposal to restructure the Agency's panel system arises from the feeling that more unbiased and objective evaluations are required, and therefore it becomes necessary to introduce panel members from outside the functional categories of those being evaluated. We believe the proposal would not meet the objective and would create other problems not presently faced.

2. Under our current system, subgroups may establish panels which in their belief best serve the needs of management and their people. At present, panel structures generally fall into three categories: (a) panels comprised solely of functional and line supervisors; (b) panels comprising supervisors and non-supervisors; and (c) panels consisting of members entirely removed from supervisory structures. The latter usually occurs by chance as opposed to design.

3. While supervisors can best understand the nuances of the requirements of the job vis-a-vis the employee's handling of same, others who have spent their career facing similar problems are next best suited to judge the competence of individuals being rated. Knowledge of the position and the incumbent along with the record outlining the incumbent's performance are basic ingredients leading to an effective evaluation procedure. Evaluations by individuals not knowledgeable of the person or the function would have to rely almost solely on the Fitness Report. The Fitness Report writer could conceivably spend his efforts "educating the reader" and the actual performance appraisal could take a secondary place in the report. Even with this the evaluator will not have a full appreciation for all that is said with regard to the job and the manner in which it is done.

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4. Officers who know the individual being rated can best address that person's strengths and weaknesses. Personal knowledge adds to the validity of the evaluation. Toward this generally recognized concept, subgroups in the past have initiated programs whereby the panels personally interview officers they will be evaluating. This has widespread acceptance because employees feel that the more the evaluator knows about them, the more objective and valid the evaluation will be.

5. Performance appraisal is a basic function of effective management. This concept would be impaired in a system which removes functional managers from one of the most important phases of such a system -- the assessment of an individual in comparison with his peers.

6. In addition, we do not recognize the value or purpose in having panels evaluate larger numbers of careerists and do not see how the desired objectivity will be introduced. What could evolve may be a more time consuming, cumbersome, and impersonal system. The panels operating in our current system, normally consisting of about four to seven or eight officers, are responsible for and they have more opportunity to carefully evaluate fewer than 100 employees in most instances. It is doubtful that that could exist under an expanded system.

7. If we must embark into an experimental mode such as pilot program, we prefer to have one "outsider" sit on each panel and have that officer observe and comment on the panel's actions.

8. Finally, we feel that any decision regarding changes to the current system should be delayed until completion of the survey to be conducted by the team from the National Academy of Public Administration.

[Redacted Signature Box]

*J* John F. Blake

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